

Message Text

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73

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 EB-07 AID-05 DOTE-00

COME-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

/096 W

----- 122861

R 301400Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6641

INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

C/AMEMBASSY LONDON 403

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIU WPOY

USUN NEW YORK 254

UNCLAS GABORONE 0719

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, BC, RHN SF

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA-RHODESIA RAIL LINK

REF: GABORONE 0699, 0682 (NOTAL) 0625 (NOTAL)

1. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE MAY 29 EDITION OF THE RAND DAILY MAIL BEARS ON THE QUESTIONS DISCUSSED REFTELS: QTE BOTSWANA LINK ("MAIL AFRICA BUREAU"). IF MOZAMBIQUE CARRIES OUT ITS THREAT TO CLOSE ITS BORDERS WITH RHODESIA ON JUNE 25, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT BOTSWANA WILL FOLLOW SUIT AND BLOCK THE RAIL LINK WHICH RUNS SOUTH FROM BULAWAYO TO MAFEKING.

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TOP GOVERNMENT SOURCES IN GABORONE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT

BOTSWANA HAS NO INTENTION OF TAKING ANY ACTION WHICH MIGHT
OFFEND SOUTH AFRICA.

HOWEVER, IF SOUTH AFRICA TOOK THE LEAD BY RESTRICTING RHODESIAN

RAIL TRAFFIC ACCROSS ITS OWN BORDERS FOLLOWING ACTION BY MOZAMBIQUE,
BOTSWANA WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO DO THE SUME.

THE VALUE OF THE LINE, OPERATED BY RHODESIAN RAILWAYS PERSONNEL,
IS LIMITED. A SINGLE TRACK OVER VIRTUALLY ITS WHOLE 900 KM LENGTH
THROUGH BOTSWANA, IT CAN CARRY A MAXIMUM OF 13 TRAINS A
DAY.

THERE CAN BE ONLY BE MARGINAL INCREASE IN TRAFIC, AND CERTAINLY
NOT ENOUGH TO COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF THE SALISBURY- BEIRA CAIL
LINK UNQTE.

BOLEN

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